

## So What? Coastal Zone Management Act Boundary

With the continued growth of coastal populations and haphazard development along the coast, the U.S. Congress realized that our nation's coastal areas needed proper management. Congress therefore passed the [Coastal Zone Management Act](#) in 1972, which applied to all coastal and Great Lakes states and territories, and sought to balance economic development, environmental conservation, recreation, and other uses of the nation's ocean and Great Lakes coasts. The act established the voluntary National Coastal Zone Management Program. To participate in the program, eligible states needed to develop land and water use management programs that met criteria set forth in the act. Among other things the criteria called for states to identify a [landward and seaward boundary](#), within which their programs applied.

So why should ocean planners pay attention to the coastal zone management boundary?

1. **A proposed plan might be within a state's coastal zone.** While each coastal state determines its inland coastal zone boundary, to be approved by NOAA, it has to include shorelands, the uses of which have a direct and significant impact on the coastal waters. On the water side, the management area includes all state waters as determined under the Submerged Lands Act. This is three nautical miles from shore for the ocean states and territories, with the following exceptions: for Texas, the Gulf side of Florida, and Puerto Rico, their territory extends to nine nautical miles. For the Great Lakes states, there are no federal waters because each state's territory extends to the international boundary with Canada. These states might have enforceable policies that may affect or direct ocean planning.
2. **State coastal management programs apply to activities that occur outside the coastal zone.** The federal consistency provision of the Coastal Zone Management Act allows states to review certain federally undertaken, authorized, or funded projects that have a reasonably foreseeable effect on a state's coastal resources or uses (e.g., fishing) for consistency with the enforceable coastal policies of the state's coastal management program. Most federal projects inside a state's coastal zone are automatically reviewed under federal consistency. Federal projects located outside a state's coastal zone may also be subject to automatic state federal consistency review, or a state may request approval from NOAA to review the proposal. Federal actions occurring outside the coastal zone may affect the uses or resources of a state's coastal zone, and a state's coastal uses or resources may be affected even when the effect occurs outside the coastal zone. This review may even extend to an ocean plan developed in part by a federal agency.
3. **Some state coastal management programs contain "ocean plans" for the states' ocean waters.** These state ocean plans, which have been approved by NOAA, are important state policies and sources of information that can be used in federal consistency reviews and in the development

of any larger federal ocean plan. See, for example, the [Rhode Island Ocean Special Area Management Plan](#) and the [Massachusetts Ocean Plan](#).

**Quick Caveats.** Thirty-four states currently participate in the Coastal Zone Management Program. All coastal states (excluding Alaska, who was a member until July 1, 2011) as well as U.S. territories that are eligible for the program under the Coastal Zone Management Act are included. There is no requirement for states to update their coastal zone boundaries. States can choose to leave the boundaries as they were originally approved, or they can revise their boundaries and submit them to NOAA for approval. Each state's inland coastal zone boundary is different, so the boundary lines between states often do not match up, making the data set lines fuzzy at state borders. If interested in a specific state's boundary, [contact the state](#) for the most accurate version. The San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission boundary was excluded from this version of the data set but will be added in the next round of updates. Lastly, while federal lands are excluded by statute from the coastal zone, these were not excluded from this data set.

### Data-Source Experts

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